



**Senate Bill 1198, An Act Implementing the Recommendations  
of the School Indoor Air Quality Working Group**

Education Committee

March 15, 2023

The Mechanical Contractors Association of Connecticut (MCAC) is an association of trade union mechanical contractors who provide mechanical services in HVAC, plumbing, piping, sheet metal and other work, and are signatories to the Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 777 collective bargaining agreement.

MCAC is a member of the Coalition for Healthy Air in Schools, which supports Senate Bill 1198. **MCAC also supports Senate Bill 1198 and respectfully requests that the Education Committee approve the bill.** Senate Bill 1198 would help maintain healthy indoor air quality in public schools and improve the learning environment for schoolchildren and the work environment for teachers and administrators.

Senate Bill 1198 implements the recommendations of the school indoor air quality working group by extending and expanding the charge of the school indoor air quality (IAQ) working group; establishes the School IAQ and HVAC Portal for the purpose of collecting and making available reports of inspections and evaluations of IAQ and HVAC systems; increases the amount of funding under the HVAC system grant program; and requires the Commissioner of Public Health to establish an optimal thermal comfort range of 65-85 degrees in school buildings and facilities, noting that gymnasiums may have a wider comfort range.

Senate Bill 1198 extends the IAQ working group final report and dissolution to July 2024. The work of the group is continuing and ongoing. Also, the bill expands the working group's charge by including frequency and scope of proper maintenance of HVAC system best practices in school buildings. Additionally, it adds a system of equitable distribution of funds, based on need, under the HVAC system grant program. Funds should be distributed in part based on equity.

Additional recommendations from the working group that will help enhance IAQ and which the Coalition and MCAC support, with some comments and changes indicated, include:

- Requiring the Department of Administrative Services to establish and maintain a single electronic portal for receiving and posting the report and results of an inspection and evaluation of school building IAQ and HVAC systems. The bill also requires DAS to collect and aggregate this data.
- Requiring DAS to develop the forms and reporting protocols for collecting inspection reports and authorizing DAS to work in consultation with members of the HVAC industry to develop standard reporting forms.
- Eliminating the option to use EPA's Tools for Schools program to conduct a three-year inspection program and require school districts to use its approved inspection program. However, *please note: the working group approved the inspection to be performed annually for all public schools, not just those constructed or renovated after Jan. 2023, which the coalition and MCAC hopes is corrected.* Also, there should be a clear start date for inspections.
- Moving back the deadline by which boards of education must complete the five-year HVAC assessment by one year, from Jan. 2024 to Jan. 2025.
- Building walkthrough inspections should be conducted and be posted to a school district's website annually, however, reporting to the state should take place every 5 years (at the same time as a comprehensive five-year inspection), not every year. Annual reporting would create an administrative burden.
- Allowing DAS to grant waivers for the Jan. 2025 deadline if there is an insufficient supply of certified technicians to perform the inspection, if the board has already performed an inspection DAS deems sufficient, or if the board has already scheduled an inspection to take place after the Jan. 1, 2025, deadline.
- Authorizing the State Bond Commission to issue \$375 million in bonds for the HVAC grant program over two years.

By adopting the recommendations in Senate Bill 1198, the legislature will continue to enact public policies that will improve indoor air quality in the public schools and the environment in which education is offered. A sustainable funding stream to support school HVAC maintenance and repairs over time and assist municipalities will help protect the health of students, teachers and administrators.

Trade union HVAC contractors are qualified, properly trained and ready and able to maintain and improve indoor environmental conditions in schools across the state, and to help them continue to return to full capacity operation. Improving indoor air quality is an essential part of maintaining a safe and healthy learning and working environment for all schoolchildren, teachers and administrators in public schools.

Please contact Kristen Brainerd Abrahamson, Executive Vice President of MCAC, at (203) 248-3098, for additional information or any questions.